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## REVIEWS

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*Atti degli incontri sulle opere di Dante I. Vita Nova – Fiore – Epistola XIII.*  
Manuele Gragnolati, Luca Carlo Rossi, Paola Allegretti, Natascia Tonelli and  
Alberto Casadei, eds.  
Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018. X + 432 pp. €58.

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Since 2013, the Società Dantesca Italiana has undertaken a series of workshops dedicated to Dante's works, destined to culminate with the celebration of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dante's death in 2021. These workshops—titled *loperesequite*, from *Paradiso* XXIV “la prova che ‘l ver dischiude / son l'opere seguite,” which is also the motto of the society—aim to renew the discussion of Dante's texts, seen not as immutable monoliths, but as living and breathing works of literature, still capable of new interpretations and meanings. This volume publishes the workshop proceedings on three of Dante's works, namely the *Vita Nova*, the *Fiore*, and the *Epistola XIII* to Can Grande della Scala. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the book is divided into three sections, one dedicated to each work, and features several contributions by well-recognized scholars.

As can be expected, the *Vita Nova* plays the lion's share, due to its complexity and relevance in Dante's oeuvre and the fact that the SDI has dedicated two different workshops to this text, coordinated respectively by Manuele Gragnolati and Luca Carlo Rossi. The essays dedicated to the *Vita Nova* cover a multitude of different subjects: among others, Erminia Ardissino deals with Dante's theories of love; Gragnolati himself focuses on strategies of self-exegesis; Elena Lombardi considers the ways in which this early work sketches some elements of Dante's theory of language; Roberto Rea studies the relationship with Cavalcanti; while Natascia Tonelli analyzes the relationship between prose and poetry. The choice of not addressing one single theme, but rather stimulating a varied discussion, allows the different contributors to shed light on diverse issues related to the *Vita Nova*, rightfully considered fundamental to understand Dante's *Weltanschauung* and his beginnings as a poet.

The second and third sections of the book dedicated to the *Fiore* and the *Epistola a Can Grande* are quite different from the one on the *Vita Nova*, since these two works, unlike the *Vita Nova*, are subject to discussions of authorship. Paola Allegretti opens and closes the section on the *Fiore* with two essays that organize and frame the entire discussion. Her first essay focuses on the *Fiore* by first considering Contini's opinion, a position that even nowadays represents a fundamental interlocutor on the matter. She then pivots to the history of a quatrain from the *Fiore* which seems to imply this poem was in circulation much earlier than its publication in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Allegretti's second essay addresses the materiality of the manuscript in which the *Fiore* is recorded and its physical description.

Even though the issue of authorship is not the specific subject of any of the essays, it was impossible for the authors to ignore the elephant in the room, especially owing to the presence of different and sometimes antithetical opinions among the contributors. Both Luciano Formisano and Pasquale Stoppelli, although focusing on other issues, do not refrain from showing their different opinions on authorship. Formisano, who declares himself in support of Dante's attribution—although with some doubts—discusses some of the most relevant issues related to the attribution and different views in the scholarship; for this reason, he expresses his disagreement with Stoppelli on the francophone texture of the language. Stoppelli, meanwhile, considers how to create a critical edition of the *Fiore* that would be most academically honest (something that he has already discussed in his book, *Dante e la paternità del "Fiore"*). A good critical edition of the *Fiore* and the *Detto d'amore* should not use Dante's poetical habits as a guide for emendation, Stoppelli argues, because this would obviously invalidate any discussion both regarding the author and the value of the work itself. The final essay of this section belongs to Luca Carlo Rossi, who in his own edition of the *Fiore* attributed the work to Dante Alighieri. His contribution is particularly apt because he discusses his own criteria for this edition, the intended readership of the poem, and the reasons behind some of his editorial choices. In the end, more than an extensive study on the *Fiore* as a text, both the workshop and these subsequent essays aim to cultivate a discussion about the text's main problems, the different approaches of scholarship, and how to reconcile a complex balance.

Not so different is the issue of the *Epistle to Can Grande*, insofar as both deal with an uncertain attribution. Alberto Casadei's chapter, "Situazione dell'Epistola a Cangrande: una sintesi," immediately illustrates the debates about whether this letter should be attributed to Dante and to what degree. The issue, however, is very different from the discussion involving the *Fiore*, because at stake here is the possibility that someone pretended to be Dante Alighieri and as such made claims that do not necessarily agree with Dante's intention. It is a delicate matter, because it might change the way the *Commedia* (and especially the *Paradiso*) is read and interpreted. Casadei's article, then, focuses on two recent studies by Saverio Bellomo and Luca Azzetta—both of whom support Dante's authorship of the letter—and argues why he believes these studies are not convincing enough and why Dante's authorship should be dismissed. Paolo De Ventura, on the other hand, argues that it is very hard to reject the attribution to Dante and he reviews some of the scholarly works on the matter, especially by his co-contributor Casadei. Moreover, he focuses on one example—the title of the *Commedia*—and how the question is intertwined with the status of the letter and its exegesis. Giuseppe Indizio shares similar beliefs about Dante's authorship, but does so from another angle, namely the tradition of the letter in the first few centuries, and its direct or indirect presence in commentaries and other works. Finally, Marco Veglia tackles the intention of the letter, which is the Dantean attempt to save a friendship in difficulty in view of *Paradiso* XVII.

What we are reading is a book of great complexity, that aims at giving an overview of the *Vita Nova*, the *Fiore*, and the *Epistola XIII*, focusing especially on the tradition of the scholarship about these texts and the explanations of their main issues. Even though it is not intended as a manual, it is clearly a collection of essays

that can be read by scholars and neophytes alike, for the different contributions enlighten various aspects and problems in Dantean historiography. Moreover, the main virtue of this volume is that it stems from several workshops occurring over several years, and as such brings about a continuous conversation between the different articles, even if sometimes critically in opposition to each other. In this way, these contributions serve as a fundamental update on the state of the field.

Mario Sassi, *University of Pennsylvania*

Italo Bertelli.

*Studi sul Due e Trecento. Analisi e letture da Giacomo da Lentini a Dante.*  
Pisa-Roma: Serra, 2017. 92 pp. €22

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Italian vernacular literature is a multi-faceted research topic. It contains the dawn of a poetry that, while it shows noteworthy connections to the Medieval Provençal lyric tradition, it struggles to find an original means to communicate its own literary message. Indeed, as is well known, during the relatively short period of time going from the early-13th century to the beginning of the 14th century, Italian poetry significantly changed in terms of content, style, and form. Following this line of reasoning, Italo Bertelli's recently published study (*Studi sul Due e Trecento. Analisi e letture da Giacomo da Lentini a Dante*, 2017) has intended to offer close readings of well selected – and quite different – literary works of seven vernacular poets. Through this work, Bertelli has shown how remarkable the difference is between – for instance – Giacomo da Lentini's lyric production and Iacopone's religious compositions, as well as between Compiuta Donzella's sonnets and Dante's *Vita Nova* (VN).

Divided into seven brief chapters, Bertelli's short volume (86 pages) is mostly devoted to a careful analysis on the rhetorical, stylistic, and formal peculiarities of a small selection of poems. The first chapter offers a detailed analysis of Giacomo da Lentini's ballad *Meravigliosamente*. Depending upon Occitan literature's stylistic features and Sicilian poetry's expressive grace, this ballad embodies some of the most important characteristics of Giacomo's lyric production: the rich inventiveness of his verses, the originality of his style, the beauty of his images, etc.

The second chapter dwells on the three sonnet composed by Compiuta Donzella: *A la stagion che 'l mondo foglia e fiora*; *Lasciar vorria lo mondo e Dio servire*; *Ornato di gran pregio e di valenza*. As the reader knows, Compiuta Donzella was the earliest woman poet of the Tuscan vernacular and was connected with influent late-thirteenth century poets such as Bonagiuta, Chiaro Davanzati, and Guittone. Although Bertelli recognizes the importance of Compiuta Donzella in Italian Medieval literature, he makes it clear that Donzella's lyric production should not be excessively praised. In fact, even though her three sonnets are a unique tool to fully understand the very beginning of Italian vernacular poetry, Donzella's artistic culture suffers from a lack of rhetorical and ideological limitations.

Thematic and stylistic limitations also affect Gianni Alfani's ballad *Donne, La donna mia ha d'un disdegno* (third chapter). Bertelli, in fact, points out that this ballad overly depends on a passive imitation of Cavalcanti's lyric *corpus*. At the same time, however, Bertelli suggests that the ballad's conventional images (i.e., Love's bow; the woman's disdain, etc.) have unconventional characteristics.

Although relatively brief, the analysis of Verzellino's poetic exchange with the Tuscan poet Dino Frescobaldi is particularly engaging (fourth chapter). According to Bertelli's close reading, Verzellino's sonnet helps the reader understand the psychological interests characterizing Florence's social community in the late-thirteenth century. In addition, on the other hand, the sonnet sheds some lights on the intense network of intellectual relations between the vernacular poets.

By observing Chiaro Davanzati's lyric production, the fifth chapter of Bertelli's study investigates the cultural, intellectual, and literary relationship between Guido Guinizzelli and Chiaro himself. Additionally, Bertelli suggests that the influence of the Occitan and Sicilian poetry was everything but irrelevant on Chiaro's rhymes.

What was quite stimulating were the pages dedicated to Iacopone's religious poetry. Divided into four sections, the chapter dwells on the style, content, and literary sources of the laud *Donna de Paradiso*. After having acutely analyzed the most relevant images of Iacopone's poem – i.e., Christ's manifestation; Mary's lamentations, the invocation to Jesus, etc. – Bertelli concludes by affirming that Medieval popular spirituality played a pivotal role in shaping the verses of *Donna de Paradiso*.

Finally, the last chapter of the book is – as already mentioned – focused on Dante. In particular, it scrutinizes the well-known sonnet *Tutti li miei penser parlan d'amore* (VN 13) and underlines the relevance of this sonnet for the narrative development of Dante's *Vita Nova*.

In other words, Bertelli's book is a useful guide through the main issues concerning the early origin of Italian vernacular literature. In fact, even though the relatively limited length of this present study does not really allow the reader to become engaged completely with the complexity of the whole picture, *Studi sul Due e Trecento* may function as an introductory approach to some of the most interesting, fascinating, and stimulating questions debated by the literary critics in the last few years.

Mattia Boccuti, *University of Notre Dame*

Vittorio Montemaggi.

*Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology. Divinity Realized in Human Encounter*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 307 pp. \$87.

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Vittorio Montemaggi is both a theologian and an Italianist within the interdisciplinary field of religion and literature. He began his career nearly two decades ago in

the U.K. (Cambridge and Leicester), before moving to the U.S. (Notre Dame), and then returning to the U.K., where he is lecturer in Religion and the Arts at King's College London. His earlier volume co-edited with Matthew Treherne is a clear result of his interdisciplinary approach: *Dante's Commedia: Theology as Poetry* (2010). He has also published several methodological articles on the ways in which literature conveys religious messages and vice versa, and on the status of Dante's *Comedy* as a text at once literary and theological. Thus, one might say that his more recent *Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology: Divinity Realized in Human Encounter* represents the result of a more than a decade of reflection on the extent to which Dante's *Comedy* is a true work of theology. These biographical data are necessary to understand not only the author's methodological approach but also the deeper aims of his volume.

The essence of *Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology* is communicated in its subtitle: "Divinity realized in human encounter." Indeed, according to Montemaggi, reading the *Commedia* as theology "is an activity that can help us realize divinity in human encounter – with Dante, with each other, with our own self" (30). Montemaggi, thus, concretizes the importance of these human encounters by inserting several autobiographical references which testify to how all these encounters profoundly contributed to his writing of the book and to his formation as a scholar, and more generally, as a human being. These insertions (which may surprise the typical reader of a scholarly work) constitute a precise methodological choice on the part of the author; they call the reader to find the "divine" in his or her own encounters with the other and to see how the *Comedy*, throughout its one hundred cantos, is in fact a theological and literary work on "encounter". Such a focus on encounter represents the "particularity" – rather than the "originality" – of Montemaggi's volume, and the particular hermeneutic of encounter reads the *Comedy* as "a form of human encounter with its author" (27) and with our neighbor in any context, including (and perhaps foremost) the academic world.

The first chapter *Reading the 'Commedia' as Theology* is a concrete manifestation of the value of such encounters and is the most autobiographical of the volume. This chapter is, however, fundamental for establishing Montemaggi's essentially theological interpretation of the *Comedy*. What is "theology" exactly? Unlike (or in addition to) the meaning of "theology" or "theologian" in the late Middle Ages, the scholar chooses a contemporary approach towards the *Commedia's* "theology", describing it as "discourse and inquiry about God wishing to aid us in our comprehension of our relationship with, and in our journeying into, the divine" (63). Thus, the *Commedia* can be read as a guided journey towards the realization that every encounter with the other is an encounter with God—the divine reveals itself in the network of relationships between man and man, in the unrepeatable singularity of those relationship, and in the everyday moments of life.

After having established the centrality of "encounter" in the architecture of the poem, the second chapter *Truth and Theological Virtue* deals more closely with Dante's text and Dante's understanding of truth. As the scholar explains, Dante's theological ideas concerning "truth" are of a threefold and intertwined nature: the ultimate truth, Dante's conception of the possibility of that truth, and Dante's understanding of the truthfulness of the poem. According to this rubric, Montemaggi analyzes *Par.* 25–26, the cantos of the Heaven of the Fixed Stars in which Dante is

interrogated by Saints Peter, James, and John on the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. These cantos represent the only time Dante explicitly presents himself as doing something akin to academic theology. For instance, from Aquinas' answer in *Par.* 11, we can infer that Dante considers theology to be "intellectual seeking" that transcend earthly divisions and aims toward "unity-in-diversity" (92-97). Ultimately, the result of Montemaggi's analysis is that Dante's belief that truth "is to be identified with love and that [...] theology can [...] be conceived as an act of praise" (90). Taken together with Dante's lines "Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro / al ha posto mano e cielo e terra" (*Par.* 25.1-2), Montemaggi highlights the profound interconnection between Heaven and Earth, humanity and divinity: an interconnectedness that nourishes (and is nourished) by hope. Thus, this connection is a specific feature of the ethical dimension of Dante's theology; in other words, according to Dante, to practice theology – i.e. to say something about God – coincides with the humble and daily exercise of the virtues of faith, hope, and love that make man worthy of Heaven. (Montemaggi returns to the role of the *Commedia* in cultivating the virtues and the active exercise of virtues in the third chapter, especially on pages 232-233). In the last section of the chapter (2.12. "Reading Dante in Community"), Montemaggi underlines the poetic form of Dante's theology and reminds the reader how Aquinas considered poetry to be "infima inter omnes doctrinae", a point generally accepted by scholars. By quoting the theologian Denis Turner – who argued against this view by showing how the conception of human embodiedness would be consistent with a "poetic view of language as the inextricable union of body and thought" – Montemaggi observes how poetic language as human embodiment configured as love, can "reveal the peace that transcends and communally unifies all human wisdom" (154). Along these same lines, my own dissertation research has revealed that while he was writing the *Vita nova*, Dante experienced similar adversity to poetry by theologians from the time of his intellectual formation Florence in the 1290s at the "schools for the religious" ('scuole de li religiosi') and at the "disputations of the philosophers" ('disputazioni de li filosofanti'). In fact, in his *quaestiones quodlibetales* held in Santa Croce in 1295, the Franciscan Peter of Trabibus argued against the poets many times: from their speculative inability to speak about the truths of faith to their practical incapacity to understand the miraculous eclipse that occurred on the occasion of Christ's death.

As the title states, the third chapter *Pride and Prayer* focuses on pride, the Dantean sin *par excellence*. Here, Montemaggi argues that both pride and humility in the *Commedia* (precisely *Purg.* 10-12) are expressed within Dante's references to his own proud nature. Also, he argues that this duality is charged with theological meaning. Through a close reading of the famous lines of *Purg.* 11.94-99 ("Credette Cimabue ne la pittura" ecc.), the scholar observes that the use of "forse" in line 98 ("[...] e forse è nato / che l'uno e l'altro caccerà dal nido") and the fact the Dante is not named might indicate "more than empty gestures toward humility" (181). The same can be said for the *Padre nostro* at the beginning of the canto, which may be both "an instance of extreme pride and of radical humility" (186). This leads to another key point of the chapter. If Dante in *Purg.* 13 confesses his pride and his future redemption in the first terrace of the Purgatory, this statement should be considered an invitation for us readers to pray for him "in the same way that he invites us to pray for the penitent themselves" (191). In other words, one can read

the episode of the Terrace of Pride, in part, as “Dante’s call for our prayers for his forgiveness” (224). Thus, here is emphasized the second element of the chapter’s title: the value of “prayer”. Dante emphasizes, as Montemaggi argues, this value on multiple occasions within the poem, one of which is the case of the Roman Emperor Trajan who was saved by the prayers of Pope Gregory the Great. By showing how the “realization of divinity is possible through Gregory’s prayers” for Trajan (200), Montemaggi legitimately (and provocatively) wonders if the same may be applied to Virgil: whether, in other words, the journey is potentially transformative for Virgil, too, and whether Dante, upon Virgilio’s departure, might be asking to us readers to pray for the Latin poet to save him. Montemaggi, however, only argues that Virgil “might be” saved (208). Among the many hints at Virgil’s possible salvation, the scholars notes Virgil’s “sorriso” (along with that of Statius, who is saved) at the end of *Purg.* 28 as a clue that Virgil “mov[es] in harmony with Dante and with the love which moves the sun and the other stars” (215). Even if it recalls the experience of the beheaded Orpheus, the scholar argues that the comparison between the Pilgrim and the legendary Greek poet is meant to evoke presence and life rather than loss and death; it is also meant to recall the first martyr of Florence, St. Minias, instead of Bertran de Born.

Therefore, Montemaggi’s study highlights the idea that Dante “invites us [readers] to see that recognition of the truthfulness of the *Commedia* coincides with the realization in the human encounter of our inherent divinity” (239). To drive home his concept of encounter, the *Epilogue* summarizes the arguments of the book and celebrates particular encounters with colleagues, students, and friends that have shaped his own work. He focuses on the value of prayer, on Dante’s ability to “nourish and enrich our own ability to pray” (243), and on the value of joy (both in reading and in scholarship) and desire. He then reaffirms the truthfulness of Dante’s text and the value of justice by analyzing the episode of Geryon (251–253) and his “faccia [...] d’uom giusto” (*Inf.* 17.10). Like Geryon, the *Comedy* is a truthful fiction, and “it is in *our* lives that any truthfulness the *Commedia* might have will primarily be found” (253). In other words, according to Montemaggi, we readers of the *Comedy* are invited to choose the same path of purification and self-recognition in God that Dante himself undertook: the reader is indeed the actual protagonist of the Poet’s “poema sacro / al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra” (*Par.* 25.1–2).

Lorenzo Dell’Oso, *University of Notre Dame*

Luca Carlo Rossi.

*Studi su Benvenuto da Imola.*

Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018. VIII + 337 pp. €48.

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This book by Luca Carlo Rossi is part of SISMEL’s series “*Traditio et renovatio*,” whose goal is the conservation and circulation of studies on medieval subjects, while



being receptive of the modalities in which these traditions have evolved in subsequent centuries. This project on Benvenuto da Imola is no different: it is a collection of studies by the renowned scholar Luca Carlo Rossi who has extensively studied the 14<sup>th</sup>-century thinker, writer, and commentator, Benvenuto Rambaldi. As Rossi immediately declares in the foreword, *Studi su Benvenuto da Imola* presents a chronological anthology of previous essays, with corrections and updated scholarship, enhanced by a brand-new paper dedicated to future directions in the field.

Often, publications of this kind, although stimulating in the depth of a single study, lack in coherence and unity, absent of a connective narrative and missing the opportunity of giving such a character a fairer portrait. Luckily, this is not what happens in this book: although, as said before, the different chapters are nothing more than diverse essays, Rossi works toward merging all of these studies into a coherent and therefore effective homogeneity, enriching each single chapter by means of connections and references throughout the book.

What stands out from reading *Studi su Benvenuto da Imola* is a different way of talking about an author: a monograph that tries to describe Benvenuto's works not with a straightforward path but by means of shedding light on different aspects of his personality and his works. Across the six chapters that form this book, Rossi ambitiously collects his studies on this important 14<sup>th</sup>-century scholar, highlighting not only his personal achievements, but also his role in the cultural milieu of the Trecento.

Therefore, the first chapter, dedicated to Benvenuto da Imola as a reader of Lucan, is an excellent starting point, because it immediately demonstrates a more complex scholar than his better-known career as commentator of Dante's *Commedia* has historically permitted. Benvenuto worked on a broader number of texts, and he surely showed great interest and knowledge that goes beyond the commentary on the Florentine poet's masterpiece. For instance, what surely did not pass unnoticed by Benvenuto is Lucan's production—despite the difficulties of placing his works in too narrow genres. This is evident in MS. 653 of the University Library of Padua, a codex that possibly features Benvenuto's commentary on Lucan's *Pharsalia*, although not in its entirety. Rossi's analysis is a philological one, making use of other manuscripts—both recognized as Benvenuto's or not—in order to establish his authorship. He then studies the kind of secondary work that Benvenuto undertook on Lucan's text. This is a very comprehensive analysis, that through examples and a thorough study of the sources gives an interesting perspective on Benvenuto's method. Furthermore, Rossi openly discusses all the problems and issues still unresolved on the subject. This chapter concludes with a short report of a debate that happened at the conference in Ancona in 1989—where a shorter version of this paper was presented—and then reproduces the *Accessus* and an extract from Benvenuto's own commentary on Lucan's *Pharsalia*. In this way, Rossi provides the direct source of what he has just articulated in this first chapter. This is not an *unicum* of the chapter itself, however; it is in fact the opposite, because each chapter, except for the last, is enriched by at least one Appendix, mostly presenting Benvenuto's text or texts analyzed in the essays. In this way, the reader can immediately browse the sections directly to which Rossi is referring and thus participate in the dialogue.

While the second chapter gives a general yet well-documented overview of Benvenuto's successful commentary on Valerius Maximus, the third chapter connects a systematic philological analysis with an historical one. In chapter three, Rossi discusses the prefaces of the three works in which Benvenuto strongly associates his name with the d'Este family. These consist of the two commentaries (on Dante and on Valerius Maximus) and the *Libellus Augustalis*. It is with these three works that Benvenuto ties himself to Niccolò II d'Este, the most preeminent patron in this phase of his career.

The next two chapters then focus on the two greatest writers of Benvenuto's age: Boccaccio and Petrarch, with whom Benvenuto had first-hand communication. Benvenuto's commentary on Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen* becomes an experiment, a way of dealing with a writing style that was very different from Dante's and from Benvenuto's own interests. This explains Benvenuto's approach to this kind of commentary, as both a movement towards Virgil and the classical poets, and by comparison with Dante Alighieri.

In conclusion, this book is a very useful resource for readers seeking a comprehensive study on Benvenuto da Imola. His famous commentary on the *Commedia* is not the specific analysis of any of the essays, yet it is constantly and necessarily referred to in the papers. The result of Rossi's careful analysis of Benvenuto's fortune is the description of a complex and rich figure, and his relationship with other scholars and writers of his time, especially Petrarch and Boccaccio. Luca Carlo Rossi, whose studies have greatly enhanced modern scholarship on Italian literature, gives an important overview of the studies on Benvenuto, many the fruit of his own writings, and then contributes a necessary update to the state of the field on this writer. The outcome is a book that is strongly tailored to scholars of the entire Trecento, but that could be appreciated also by other specialists thanks to rigorous study and vibrant research.

Mario Sassi, *University of Pennsylvania*

*Ottimo Commento alla 'Commedia.'*

Giovanni Battista Boccardo, Massimiliano Corrado, and Vittorio Celotto, eds.

*Chiose sopra la 'Comedia.'*

Ciro Perna, ed.

Edizione Nazionale dei Commenti Danteschi, 16. Rome: Salerno, 2018. 3+1 vols. 2800 pp. €290.

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Twenty years ago, a group of Italian philologists led by Enrico Malato and Andrea Mazzucchi began a project of crucial importance for modern Dante studies: the complete edition of the ancient commentaries of the *Commedia* ('Edizione Nazionale dei Commenti Danteschi'). Since 2001, philological editions of many texts devoted to explaining Dante's poem have been published, such as the 'Commenti'

by Cristoforo Landino, Alessandro Vellutello, Iacomo della Lana and Andrea Lancia. The Salerno publishing house has now published in three volumes, the work that is traditionally known as the *Ottimo Commento* [the ‘Excellent Commentary’], a name assigned by the Accademia della Crusca in 1612 to highlight the enormous prestige of this ancient text (1334ca.).

The first (and so far, only) printed edition of the *Ottimo* was published in Pisa between 1827–29 by Niccolò Capurro and edited by the Veronese scholar Alessandro Torri. Unfortunately, the text edited by Torri was based only on a single witness, a copy of a manuscript housed at the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence compiled in 1816 by the priest Bartolomeo Follini. Consequently, Torri’s edition was full of transcription errors and interpretive oversights.

This new version of the *Ottimo*, edited by three young Italian philologists—Giovanni Battista Boccardo, Massimiliano Corrado, and Vittorio Celotto, represents the first critical edition of the most important fourteenth-century Florentine commentary of the *Commedia*, based on the analysis of 49 manuscripts. As pointed out by the curators in the Introduction, the *Ottimo* is a work that is characterized by constant comparison with all the previous exegetic traditions relating to Dante’s poem. In many parts of the text, the anonymous author explicitly compares the interpretations of several previous commentaries: the notes to the *Inferno* by Jacopo Alighieri (1322ca.), the vernacular commentary by Iacomo della Lana, the Latin *expositio* of the *Inferno* by Graziolo Bambaglioli (1324), the *Chiose Palatine* (before 1333), etc. This characteristic makes the *Ottimo* a global work, which seeks to take stock of the situation over a young but already established literary genre such as the commentaries on the *Commedia*.

Despite this clear compilatory tendency, the *Ottimo Comento* remains an original work, and its author frequently states his opinion on specific interpretations and disagrees with other commentators. In this regard, it may be useful to look at the example of the commentary of *Inf.* 13.91–108 (p. 218), in which the anonymous commentator denigrates Graziolo Bambaglioli’s interpretation of the punishment of suicides after the universal judgment, which he defines as useless. However, the *Ottimo* does not comment on the verses of the *Commedia* only with regard to the exegetical tradition. In many cases, the author displays great familiarity with Dante’s works. He is familiar both with a not easily accessible treatise such as the *Convivio* and with the text of the *Vita nuova*. For example, in the comments of *Inf.* 7.73–80 and 9.91–93, the author quotes the *canzone* ‘Voi che ’ntendendo il terzo ciel movete’ (pp. 174, 217), while in the glossa on *Inf.* 1.91–105 he transcribes the verses 70–72 of *Tre donne intorno al cor mi venute* (p. 32).

In addition to the genuinely extraordinary knowledge about Dante’s writings and his commentators, the author of the *Ottimo* indicates that he also enjoyed a privileged relationship with the *exul immeritus*. Indeed, in two passages of the commentary, he claims to have spoken directly with the poet. Specifically, in the glossa of *Inf.* 10.85–87 he states that he heard Dante affirm that the use of the word in rhyme *tempio* in place of *chiesa* was not a choice dictated by reasons of a metrical order but a selection involving a precise metaphorical intent. Similarly, the author claims to have learned from Dante’s voice the legend that circulated in Florence about the statue of Mars, the ancient protector of the city, mentioned in *Inf.* 13.146–47 (p. 322).

Precisely where and when the author of the *Ottimo* met Dante is difficult to establish, since every reference in the commentary refers to Dante speaking about the *Commedia*. Since the poet never returned to Florence after his conviction, in 1302, the two likely met in Northern Italy during Dante's exile. What is certain is that the author of the *Ottimo* belonged to that group of Florentine devotees of Dante who, in the first half of the fourteenth century, gave rise to an exegetical movement aimed at spreading and promoting the work of their illustrious fellow citizen. Thanks to the work of these researchers, today we can read in a genuinely *ottima* and philologically impeccable version one of the most exceptional texts of the Dantean exegetical tradition. This monumental work is also accompanied by the edition of a supplemental commentary, the so-called *Amico dell'Ottimo* ['The Friend of the *Ottimo*'], beautifully edited by Ciro Perna, who based his edition on the analysis of four manuscripts.

The publication of these two works is an event to be welcomed with great enthusiasm. Both the critical editions not only contribute to the reconstruction of the extraordinary exegetical tradition of the *Commedia* in the years following Dante's death, but also remind us of the need to have philologically accurate editions of the texts linked to this tradition, especially in an age like ours, rich in new ideas on the interpretation of Dante's work.

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Nicolò Maldina.

*In pro del mondo. Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale.*

La Navicella dell'ingegno, 6. Rome: Salerno, 2017. 260 pp. €24.

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The main goal of Maldina's book is to offer an introductory study of the relationship between Dante's *Commedia* and the homiletic genre of Medieval preaching. The main issue for such research lies in the substantial impossibility of tracing precise textual references which go beyond generic consonances. As the author himself stresses, it is not possible to point at any precise text because, on the one hand, the manuscripts containing sermons were probably off limits to laymen during the Middle Ages, and, on the other hand, the sermons were written in Latin but planned for vernacular homiletic preaching, as if they were a sort of outline for the friars. Despite these issues at the basis of the research, Maldina attempts a reconstruction of echoes, stylistic devices which are the common traits which can link Dante's *Commedia* to the homiletic genre. In this sense, the most evident relation is the parenthetic finality of both Dante's poem and the sermons offered by preachers.

The book is organized in four chapters which treat different but intertwined topics. The first chapter, *Dante, la predicazione e la crisi del genere visionario* reconstructs the history of religious literature between eleventh and twelfth centuries. Maldina suggests how, in Dante's time, the particular genre of the otherworldly

*visio* had been combined into numerous other religious genres. Among these, the homely featured, as a form which gathers the prophetic and eschatological ferments which characterized the *visio* of previous centuries. Obviously, such ferments are regathered in the genre of the *visio* in Dante's *Commedia*, a poem which reunites eschatology and prophetism under the banner of the afterlife journey.

The second chapter, *Predicazione e predicatori nella 'Commedia'*, analyzes the passages of Dante's poem which somehow deal with preaching. If on the one hand the false preachers identifiable with modern ecclesiastic hierarchy are condemned because Dante feels they have betrayed the evangelical message of poverty and humility, on the other hand, the Dantean lines tend to praise the preachers who have conveyed that same evangelical message, i.e. the Apostles, especially Paul, and modern saints such as Francis and Dominic.

The third chapter, *Figure della predicazione*, focuses on the rhetorical and stylistic aspects of the so-called *sermo modernus*, the particular homiletic genre which came to life during the twelfth century. Maldina argues that Dante's divine mission is highlighted not only by the substantial function of prophet and preacher accorded to him, but also by the peculiar literary styles through which Dante shapes the eschatological message he carries, as he expresses his prophecies according the style of the *rhetorica divina*.

The final chapter, entitled *Stili omiletici*, analyzes three different passages of the *Commedia* which relate to the genre of medieval preaching. In particular, the instance of *Inferno* 19 can be related to the specific subgenre of homely which is moral rebuke; the purgatorial episode of the *girone* of pride (cantos 10-12) helps not only demonstrating how the homiletic style helps repressing sins, but it also exhorts to the opposite virtue (in this case, humility); cantos 4 and 5 of *Paradiso* offer an example of how the homiletic genre can function as an intertext for what concerns the more marked aspect of the *Commedia*.

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Filippo Andrei.

*Boccaccio the Philosopher. An Epistemology of the Decameron.*

Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. XI + 259 pp. \$99.

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In Italian literary tradition, there are many authors whose contribution to philosophical thought has not been fully appreciated. Giovanni Boccaccio is certainly one of these. Although writing across an impressive variety of different genres and topics, including history, mythology, and moral psychology, Boccaccio's legacy as an author seems to be especially tied to his purely literary works. For most scholars, as well as for a more general public, Boccaccio is, first and foremost, the witty and colorful author of the *Decameron*.

While the *Decameron*'s role in the development of Italian literature cannot be underestimated, this view runs the risk of overshadowing a large and significant

part of his production. By rejecting the idea that Boccaccio was purely and simply a narrator (indeed, an exceptionally gifted one), Filippo Andrei's book provides a refreshing insight into Boccaccio's interests in philosophy. *Boccaccio the Philosopher* does a good service to scholars not only because it offers a clear and convincing account of what is not immediately graspable in Boccaccio's works, but also because its analysis focuses primarily on Boccaccio's literary masterpiece *par excellence*: the *Decameron*.

Boccaccio, Andrei argues, was not a philosopher in the same sense Plato or Aristotle were; i.e., he did not build a comprehensive system encompassing all branches of philosophical inquiry. This does not mean, however, that he did not contribute at all to the investigation of topics that have some relevance for philosophy.

Andrei convincingly shows that the *Decameron* presents an "undercurrent philosophical discourse" (p. 3), a discourse that runs through all the tales of the collection and outlines a coherent theoretical parabola. The main components of this discourse are epistemology (namely, the analysis of the processes and dynamics of knowledge) and practical wisdom. Along with the many stories it presents, Andrei claims, the *Decameron* carries out an investigation into human knowledge and theory of action.

Composed of five chapters, Andrei's book may be divided into three main sections. The first one, corresponding to chapter 1, explores Boccaccio's training in ancient and medieval thought as well as his philosophical terminology presented in the *Decameron*. The second section, unfolded in chapters 2 through 4, examines Boccaccio's theory of knowledge emerging from three main issues within the *Decameron*: these are the epistemic nature of the *fabula*, the notion of the journey as a process of knowledge acquisition, and Boccaccio's recourse to the enigmatic device of the *motto* as a means to illustrate the functioning of the human mind. Boccaccio's rhetorical use of *mottos* serves as transition towards the last section of the book, presented in chapter 5 and devoted to practical philosophy and theory of action. In this chapter, Andrei presents an analysis of "the moral discourse of the *Decameron*" (p. 184), a discourse making its way from the very prologue of the work which, by identifying its *raison d'être* in the "clear recollection of the kindnesses received" ("la memoria de' benefici già ricevuti"), provides the composition of the whole *Decameron* with a clear moral basis – i.e. the return of a *beneficium*, following a tradition that can be traced back most notably to Seneca.

Seneca is, unsurprisingly, one of the philosophical sources Boccaccio was certainly familiar with. One of the aspects making Andrei's book most convincing is that it grounds all its arguments on historical and material evidence. In chapter 1, for instance, Andrei provides a detailed account of Boccaccio's "philosophical library." From the perspective of a modern reader, it is interesting to observe how conspicuous the philosophical readings were of a person who never styled himself as a philosopher. In fact, Andrei's list features a wide variety of thinkers, from Greco-Roman antiquity to the Islamic world, to the Latin Middle Ages: Plato, Aristotle, al-Ghazālī, Seneca, Horace, Cicero, Macrobius, Augustine of Hippo, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Hermes Trismegistus, William of Auxerre, Thomas Aquinas, to mention only a few (p. 7). While still young, Boccaccio transcribed entire sections from some of these authors' writings in his famous *Zibaldoni*,

now preserved in the Biblioteca Laurenziana and Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence.

The *Zibaldoni* thus testify for Boccaccio's early interests in philosophy, and they offer a very concrete example inviting us to reconsider some of the trajectories undertaken by Boccaccio's intellectual activity. Among the many philosophical items copied by Boccaccio in his *Zibaldoni*, Andrei might have mentioned a few more as significant for the shaping of Boccaccio's philosophical views. One of these is the famous *Carmen* on fortune, which Boccaccio transcribes in ms. BLaur., Plut. 33.31, f. 33v. The *Carmen* is a well-known Latin composition that describes fortune by appealing to all the *topoi* traditionally associated with this notion (fortune's inconsistency and unpredictability, its being fickle and capable of overturning people's destiny). All these motives will be drawn upon by Boccaccio in the many passages of his works dealing with fortune—a concept which, by combining epistemological and practical aspects (one needs *to know* how natural causality actually works in order *to foresee and address* unexpected events), presents important philosophical implications.

*Boccaccio the Philosopher* is a beneficial contribution to the scholarship on this essential author. It provides a sensitive and unprecedented reading of Boccaccio's philosophical preoccupations and sources. In doing so, Andrei reminds us that many different layers coexist in Boccaccio's writings and that it is not possible to separate, as Charles Osgood famously put it, “Boccaccio the poet” from “Boccaccio the scholar.”

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*La filologia in Italia nel Rinascimento.*

Carlo Caruso and Emilio Russo, eds.

Biblioteca dell'Arcadia. Studi e testi 4. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2018. XXIV + 424 pp. €58.

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The volume is comprised of twenty-one chapters dealing with the textual and editorial trajectories of both Renaissance and pre-Renaissance literature in the Italian vernacular over a period of almost two centuries, approximately from the late Quattrocento to the mid-seventeenth century. As suggested by the editors in their introductory remarks (Carlo Caruso and Emilio Russo, ‘Introduzione,’ p. vii), the historical transition from “l'età del manoscritto” to “l'età della stampa” provides the main vantage point from which this variegated collection of essays may be regarded as a whole, although the introduction of typographical innovations (including new punctuation and formats, cursive and roman types) as well as paratextual devices (such as final indexes and appendices) hardly accounts for all the questions addressed throughout the volume.

To begin with, a crucial question arises about the literary canon and its making. This is not just a recurring topic but one across the board, which intersects the

multifaceted scholarship devoted to what was known as “le Tre Corone” (i.e. Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio). A contribution by Oscar Schiavone (‘Luca Martini filologo dantesco: collazioni, annotazioni e committenze (1543-1551),’ pp. 117-132) focuses, for example, on the work carried on in the years 1546-1548 by Luca Martini, Benedetto Varchi, and other (still unidentified) fellow scholars on the text of Dante’s *Commedia*, which they scrutinized by comparing Bembo’s edition of 1502 with seven manuscripts (the project was eventually carried out in 1595 by the Accademici della Crusca); also noteworthy is a second set of textual annotations, this time by Martini alone, which can be dated to 1551 and are worth studying for their range and versatility: thanks to his acquaintance with both Dante’s oeuvre and the long tradition of its commentators and editors, not to mention his encyclopedic knowledge (spanning from the classical world to medieval science), Martini could critically assess the *variae lectiones* and not unfrequently emend the text by conjecture. In a similar vein, Martin McLaughlin’s article (‘Un petrarchista legge la *Commedia*: il Dante postillato da Giovanni Brevio,’ pp. 101-116) explores the unpublished annotations on Bembo’s 1502 edition (the book is now preserved in the Bodleian Library) by the Venetian poet Giovanni Brevio (ca. 1480-ca. 1560), which turn out to revolve less on the *lectio* of Dante’s text and more on its content (characters, classical and biblical sources, etc.), language, and metre.

Petrarch is the subject of a long essay – the longest of the collection – co-authored by Paola Vecchi Galli and Tommaso Salvatore (‘*Ex originali libro*. Schede sul canzoniere casanatense,’ pp. 133-165), which considers the dissemination of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* in Veneto in the late 1450s, when Bartolomeo Sanvito made a copy (now MS Casanatense 924) “ex originali libro”, that is from Petrarch’s own exemplar (now MS Vat. Lat. 3195); this exercise in textual stratigraphy also includes the study of later annotations on Sanvito’s manuscript, whose attribution to Ludovico Castelvetro the two scholars are inclined to call into question here. Devoted to a later phase in Petrarch’s textual scholarship is an article by Paola Italia (‘Alle origini della filologia d’autore. L’edizione del “codice degli abbozzi” di Federico Ubaldini,’ pp. 379-398), which aims to single out methods and scope of Ubaldini’s epoch-making edition of *Le rime di M. Francesco Petrarca* (1642), based itself on one of Petrarch’s original manuscripts.

As far as Boccaccio is concerned, a contribution by Carlo Caruso (‘Boccaccio anni Venti: Andrea Calvo, Hieronimo Claricio, Tizzone Gaetano da Pofi,’ pp. 177-191) dwells on the editorial policies, especially in matters metrical, deployed in the first printed editions of Boccaccio’s *Amorosa visione*, concentrating in particular on the *princeps* (1521) edited by Hieronimo Claricio (Girolamo Claruzzi) and its controversial role in twentieth-century Boccaccio criticism (in Vittore Branca’s authoritative editions – 1944, 1974<sup>2</sup> – Claricio’s text stands out as being the only extant testimony of an alleged second redaction). Riccardo Drusi (‘La filologia di Vincenzo Borghini,’ pp. 327-341) offers a reappraisal of Borghini’s *Annotazioni* (1574) on Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, which set out to import into the domain of Italian textual criticism the methods of Politian’s classical scholarship, including not only the thorough examination of any extant manuscript but also constant reference to *loci paralleli*. Equally crucial the distinction put forward by Borghini between two types of scribes: those who usually produce copies of classical Latin texts with the utmost respect for the original; and those who while copying texts in the Italian



vernacular feel free to edit and even shorten them (this second type bordering on a third one, namely, the copyst who knows it all – or “il copista saccente”).

Both Dante and Boccaccio resurface in a chapter by Luca D’Onghia (‘Primiordi della filologia dialettale,’ pp. 311–325) which surveys the first stages of the philological treatment of texts in dialect: examples include Giovan Giorgio Trissino’s “passività” (p. 314) in his 1529 edition of Dante’s *De vulgari eloquentia* regarding the quotations in lombard; the controversy arisen in 1552 between Ludovico Dolce and Girolamo Ruscelli on Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (triggered, among other things, by diverging approaches to the problem of how to handle the sections in dialect); and Giorgio Greco’s edition of Ruzante’s works (Vicenza, 1584), which shows the editor’s efforts to turn the rural Pavan dialect into a language at once rustic and consistent. In fact, the search for linguistic stability was far from being over in the realm of the vernacular: an article by Matteo Motolese (‘Lingua d’autore nel Cinquecento. Storicizzazione, codificazione, idealizzazione,’ pp. 167–176) raises the question how textual critics and commentators managed to cope with a language still in the making and much in need of a codification, particularly in the areas of orthography (most notably spelling), morphology, and micro syntax. The process is well captured by the momentous transition from the notion of *errore*, still pivotal in Giovanni Francesco Fortunio’s *Regole grammaticali della volgar lingua* (1516), to that of *licenza*, a notion crucial in Bembo’s *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), which went hand in hand with Bembo’s direct experience of the “polimorfia grafica” of the original (i.e. Petrarch’s autograph, now MS Vat. Lat. 3195).

Speaking of codification, punctuation is another area where the growing need of stability was stimulated, and inevitably complicated, by philological concerns. Annalisa Cipollone (‘Parole tra parentesi,’ pp. 37–55) documents the introduction of a new system of punctuation that also entailed a new way of interpreting the text, one which was arguably closer to editing than commenting. The template for it was provided by the aldine editions of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* and Dante’s *Commedia* (respectively in 1501 and 1502, both edited by Pietro Bembo), which feature prominently the round brackets or parentheses that Bembo had first used in his *De Aetna* (1496).

No less in the making was the field of Italian lexicography. As well as Carlo Vecce’s preliminary exploration of Leonardo da Vinci’s idiosyncratic lists of technical, mostly abstract, terms preserved in one of his ‘zibaldoni’ (‘Leonardo filologo? In margine al codice Trivulziano,’ pp. 1–7), lexicography is at the centre of a paper by Veronica Ricotta e Giulio Vaccaro (‘«Riveduti con più testi a penna». La filologia di Bastiano de’ Rossi,’ pp. 343–359), which revolves around the youngest among the founders of the Accademia della Crusca, a key figure in the team that produced the first *Vocabolario* (1612). On occasion, Bastiano de’ Rossi and his fellow *Accademici* had to turn themselves into editors – as in the case of the vernacular versions of Pietro de’ Crescenzi’s *Liber ruralium commodorum* and of Albertano da Brescia’s treatises – in order to be able to base their lexical scrutiny on philologically reliable texts, although their overarching linguistic standards prevented them from always accepting “la lingua dei testimoni” (that is, the *lectio* attested in the manuscript tradition of a given text). Further materials and suggestions on the interplay between lexicography and textual criticism at the Accademia della Crusca are provided by Paolo Trovato (‘Qualche appunto sulla filologia della

prima Crusca,' pp. 361–377). Needless to say, Florence had been a center of philological and editorial activity in the area of Italian literature well before the foundation of the Crusca in 1583: Lino Leonardi's contribution ('Guittone nella Giuntina del 1527,' pp. 61–81) focuses on the epoch-making collection of *Sonetti e canzoni di diversi antichi autori toscani* printed in Florence in 1527 by the heirs of Filippo Giunta, in particular on the materials making up the book VIII ascribed to Guittone d'Arezzo, an attribution subsequently contested and rejected (Leonardi's own recommendation is to get used to such a label as "pseudo-Guittone"); the 1527 Giuntina and, more generally, the fortunes of Italian thirteenth-century poetry in the early sixteenth century are also the subject of a paper by Claudio Vela ('Poesia del Duecento nel primo Cinquecento: istruzioni per l'uso,' pp. 83–100).

Several chapters examine the philological treatment of texts that, for one reason or another, proved to be less removed than usual from the critic, editor, or scribe who was engaging with them. Taking up a line of research best exemplified by Domenico De Robertis's 1974 article on Antonio Manetti copista, Alessio Decaria ('Poeti, copisti e filologi tra Quattro e Cinquecento,' pp. 19–35) addresses several cases in which the copyist of a poetic text happened to be a poet himself (though Decaria does not shy away from acknowledging the scepticism that haunts his approach: "il limite di questo genere di analisi consiste proprio nell'impossibilità di verificare se le innovazioni presenti nella copia che si analizza siano effettivamente da addebitare al copista-rifacitore o non siano piuttosto, almeno in parte, effetto delle precedenti trascrizioni", p. 26). The scholarly distance and dispassion typically (albeit not exclusively or necessarily) decreases when a text and its critic(s) belong to the same age, not to mention the cases in which a given author is at once the subject and the object of philological exercise; generally speaking, the volume does not leave any doubt about the potential overlapping (and ensuing messiness) of literary creativity and textual criticism, which may take on different forms and lead to the most disparate outcomes.

In Emilio Russo's study ('La prima filologia tassiana, tra recupero e arbitrio,' pp. 293–310), the virtual inextricability of textual production, transmission, and criticism is most visible and possibly disheartening. Dario Brancato ('Filologia di (e per) Cosimo I: la revisione della *Storia fiorentina* di Benedetto Varchi,' pp. 257–273) juxtaposes Varchi's *Storia fiorentina* as the author had reconfigured it before dying and the *Storia fiorentina* eventually edited for, and with the active intervention of, Cosimo I by his secretary Baccio Baldini. Paola Moreno ('Filologia d'autore, filologia della copia e per il testo a stampa. La battaglia della Ghiaradadda e i suoi effetti nella *Storia d'Italia* di Francesco Guicciardini,' pp. 239–255) offers a reassessment of the textual and editorial history of two loci from book VIII of Guicciardini's masterpiece, which throw new light on its genesis as well as Guicciardini's historical standards and philological methods. Marco Dorigatti (pp. 193–215: 'Momenti della filologia ariostesca nel Cinquecento') explores the 1556 edition of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* printed by Vincenzo Valgrisi and edited by Girolamo Ruscelli, who claimed to have at his disposal a list of corrections drafted by Ariosto himself in view of a new revised edition which he did not live long enough to publish (the authenticity of such list has been mostly rejected by modern scholars, including Dorigatti, who traces this fabrication back to Ruscelli's "istanza ammodernatrice" disguised as "ragioni pseudo-filologiche"). Claudia Berra ('Giovanni

Della Casa umanista e filologo,' pp. 217–237) provides a detailed presentation of Della Casa's humanistic and philological endeavours over two decades, from his 1537 *quaestio lepidissima* (and indeed misogynistic) called *An uxor sit ducenda* to his 1553 *zibaldone umanistico*, which included *variae lectiones* of several classical authors as well as annotations on Plutarch's *Moralia*. Finally, Paolo Procaccioli ('Filologia epistolare del medio Cinquecento. La lettera tra pratica individuale e teorizzazione,' pp. 275–291) addresses the philological problems raised by the textual instability inherent to epistolography, a genre which appears to have its own ethos (so to speak), one which allows the author to move away from the text of a letter as it stood when it was first drafted and dispatched, the revision being sometimes substantial (on the lexicon no less than the syntax) and occurring many years from the original exchange.

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Bruce McNair.

*Cristoforo Landino. His Works and Thought.*

Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 21. Leiden: Brill, 2018. VIII + 228 pp. \$143.

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Bruce McNair analyzes the life and some of the works of Cristoforo Landino (1424–1498), professor of poetry and oratory at the Florentine *Studio*, as well as writer of prose and poetry, and moral philosopher. McNair decides not to study all of Landino's works, excluding texts such as his Italian translation of Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, his *Formulario di lettere e di orazioni in volgare*, and his commentary on Horace. McNair discusses the *Xandra*, three courses taught by Landino between the fifties and the sixties (the one on Cicerone, the one on the *Canzoniere* by Petrarch and the one on the *Aeneid*); the philosophical works *De anima* and *Disputationes Camaldulenses*; the commentary on the *Aeneid* and that on the *Divine Comedy*. McNair's aim, in particular, is to study how Landino developed his ideas and methods over the course of about forty years, as well as the themes that the philosopher himself considered most important.

McNair's work presents a summary of Landino's biography and works, also explaining the goals of his book (Chapter 1). In the second chapter, McNair analyzes the *Xandra*, the only collection of poems by Landino, in which we find for the first time a concept dear to the philosopher, that of the *civis poeta*, the poet who advises the powerful. Landino will discuss again this concept in his later works. However, in the *Xandra*, the idea of the individual passing from earthly interest to the divine ones is missing (this concept will be fundamental in his later works). In the *Xandra*, the idea of *furor* as outlined in other works is also missing. Here, in fact, the *furor*, the madness, is part of the ideal of the *civis poeta*, who passes from physical concerns to civic ones (while in the other works the *furor* makes it possible to recognize the futility of earthly matters and let embrace divine things).

In the third chapter, McNair discusses some courses taught by Landino. First, McNair examines the philosopher's preface to his course on Cicero in 1458. Here, for the first time, we find some of the key themes for Landino: moral philosophy; virtue and vice; the highest good (which is the knowledge of God); the different types of knowledge; the private and the public utility of education. Furthermore, here Landino supports the idea of the geographical transfer of knowledge, which passed from Egypt to Greece and finally to Rome.

Continuing in chapter 3, McNair also discusses the preface of Landino's course on Petrarch (1467), where the philosopher defends the study and the use of the vernacular, basing his thesis on the concept of the historical development of language and of the linguistic transfer from Greek to Latin to Tuscan. As McNair observes, this concept of transfer recalls the idea of the geographical transfer of knowledge. In the same chapter, McNair also deals with the lectures on Virgil (1462–63). Here, we find a new concept of *furor*, that Landino draws from Ficino (from the *De divino furore*). Landino affirms that the divine *furor* allows poets to discuss divine elements, and, as a consequence, they can convey happiness and knowledge. Furthermore, Landino analyzes the *Aeneid*, from a grammatical and allegorical perspective. The philosopher studies the interaction between reason and appetite, which allows him to interpret the journey of Aeneas from Troy to Carthage to Rome as the passage from a life of pleasure to an active life, and finally to a contemplative life. For the first time, we find an allegory much used by Landino, that of Plato's chariot, studied by the Florentine scholar to analyze reason and appetite. Also, in these lectures, for the first time, Landino mentions Macrobius in regards to the virtues. Both Plato's chariot and Macrobius will be present in all the other works analyzed by McNair.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the study of *De anima*, a text in which Landino analyzes the nature of the soul and its powers, citing what some philosophical schools say about it. Landino classifies the powers of the soul from the least important to the most important: nutrition, sensation, motion, and reason. The Reason is, therefore, the most important power according to Landino, since the philosopher considers it the most remarkable of human abilities. In the *De anima*, we also find the concept of the rational soul (which has a double power: an inferior power called reason and a superior power called intellect). Moreover, Landino also deals with the virtues. According to the philosopher, as for Macrobius, the three types of virtues are the civil virtues (which are used to live in society with honesty and decency), the expiatory virtues (which allow to purge the soul from all the mortal things), and the virtues of the purged soul (present only in a few people, who live with a soul purged from all mortal desires). In addition, Landino discusses the divine illumination (that allows one to reach the knowledge of God, the highest good reachable by man according to the philosopher). All these issues will then be extensively covered in his commentaries.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the *Disputationes camaldulenses*, where Landino uses different terminology for active life and contemplative life, that is *negotium* and *otium*. Here, Landino states that the best life is one that combines both *negotium* and *otium*. Furthermore, in the *Disputationes* Landino discusses the allegory of the *Aeneid* (I–VI). Here, the philosopher affirms that Enea's journey from Troy throughout Italy is a journey of the mind towards divine things. The allegory is

more complex from that of 1462–63: here Landino distinguishes between a superior and an inferior reason (which allows for the development of the concept of reason) and appetite, with the divine illumination that allows Enea to reach the highest good (God).

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the commentary of the *Aeneid*, similar in many ways to the course of 1462–63. Here Landino does not use the terms *negotium* and *otium*, but rather goes back to the terminology of his course in the sixties (namely: life of pleasure, active life, and contemplative life). Chapter 8 is dedicated to the comment of the *Divine Comedy*. Here, Landino considers the triad Homer–Virgil–Dante as the transfer of poetic hegemony in epic poetry, thus resuming his ideas on philosophical and linguistic transfer. Here, we also find the description of the powers of the soul, the virtues, the different types of life, and the idea that a person may reach the highest good both through active life and contemplative life. The analogy of Plato’s chariot is also present, but here, for the first time, Landino provides the means by which a soul shattered by sensual vice and desire can redeem itself: that is, through divine grace. Divine grace not only illuminates and inspires the human soul but also allows to reach the highest good, namely God and divine things. The concept of divine grace is unknown to the ancient writers but present in Dante, says Landino. For this reason, Dante surpasses his classical predecessors.

In chapter 9, McNair presents a summary of his book, claiming that Landino’s works present Platonic elements, but not only: in fact, Landino might be considered, besides as a Platonist, or Neoplatonist, also as a Thomist, or Aristotelian. But the best label, McNair argues, would be that of a follower of Dante, who tries to merge concepts of different philosophical schools. Therefore, it is not possible to simplistically catalogue Landino, who instead shows a particularly versatile thought.

Massimiliano Lorenzon, *University of Pennsylvania*

Adriana Alessandrini.

*Il libro a stampa e la cultura del Rinascimento. Un’indagine sulle biblioteche fiorentine negli anni 1470–1520.*

Biblioteche e archivi, 35; RICABIM. Texts and studies, 3. Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018. XXVI + 340 pp. €160.

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This impressive volume constitutes an essential contribution to the history of the circulation of printed books in Italy in the early typographic age. Adriana Alessandrini focuses her work on the Florentine libraries between 1470 and 1520. The author selects this time frame for two reasons: first, because this period defines the investigation on which the documentary repertory RICABIM is based, from which Alessandrini obtains the sources that form the core of her work. Secondly, because in those years the printing industry developed exponentially in Italy, giving readers the opportunity to expand their book collections with new bibliographic products. In the Introduction, Alessandrini explains the objectives and analytical criteria of

her work. The author has selected 34 catalogues, lists of books and inventories of private and religious Florentine libraries listed in the first volume of the aforementioned RICABIM repertory, relating to the libraries of Tuscany. Through the systematic study of these documents she has built a tool capable of offering a detailed overview of the circulation of written culture in Renaissance Florence.

In the essay ‘Il libro a stampa nelle biblioteche fiorentine (1470–1520)’ (pp. 1–40) the author first provides a very detailed description of the morphology of the book lists taken into consideration. In the second section of her contribution, Alessandrini describes the different classifications of the books within the libraries examined. The last part of the essay consists of a series of statistical analyses devoted to verifying the presence of printed books in Florentine libraries between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Medici city was still considered the most important center of manuscript book production in Italy. In this regard, it is very interesting to observe how the ancient libraries of the religious orders were the most reluctant institutions to open up to printed books, while the private libraries of intellectuals and merchants housed many of the new bibliographic products. In this context, the thirteen tables and twelve graphs that the author inserts as an appendix to her extensive essay can be considered as extremely useful tools to navigate the vast amount of information provided in the following section of the book.

The second part of the volume consists of the Repertory of records describing in detail the sources analyzed, which are structured according to an analytical criterion aimed at bringing out each element related to the library list examined. The first part of each record contains information about the document's dating and the essential data about the owner of the book collection taken into consideration. The second section contains all the information that characterizes the structure of the document as a whole: language, layout of the text in the document, a narrative description of the source, original titles of the works, distinction between manuscripts and printed books, notes of provenance and many other elements useful to highlight the peculiarities of the individual document.

The last part of the volume contains the Catalogue of the authors and editions. In this part of the work, the author identifies the individual editions listed in the documents discussed in the second section of the book. For each work, Alessandrini indicates the *editio princeps* adding some information about the fortune of the text. The record then provides a transcription of the entry relating to the specific work. Among the many interesting data, it is useful to notice that Dante's *Commedia* is the vernacular literary work with the highest number of records (14), followed by Boccaccio's *Decameron* (4), and Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (3) and *Trionfi* (3); a clear sign of how, even at the end of the fifteenth century, in Florence, Dante was still considered the Tuscan poet par excellence. Although the last part of the catalogue is dedicated to unidentifiable editions, one can hypothesize about the identification of some of the titles transcribed by Alessandrini. The “Landulfus” belonged to the Dominican friar Giorgio Antonio Vespucchi is very likely one of the many printed editions of Ludolph von Saxon's *Vita Christi*, while the “Mombrino bombitio” held in the library of Lorenzo di Domenico Franceschi should be the 1477 Milanese edition of Boninus Mombritius's *Vitae Sanctorum*.

This truly remarkable volume concludes with a series of very useful tools: a documentary appendix with the transcription of some unpublished book

inventories, a rich bibliography, and a series of indexes related to: 144 identified copies, anonymous authors and texts, publishers and printers, places of printing, owners, and documentary sources.

Natale Vacalebri, *University of Pennsylvania*

Lina Bolzoni.

*Una meravigliosa solitudine. L'arte di leggere nell'Europa moderna.*

Turin: Einaudi, 2019. XXIX + 254 pp. \$33.

Bolzoni's book presents the reader with the Italian version of a book soon to be published in English by Harvard University Press. The volume originates from a series of "Berenson Lectures" delivered by Bolzoni in Fall 2012 at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (Villa I Tatti, Florence). Made out of seven chapters, *Una meravigliosa solitudine* explores the manifold ways in which early-modern European readers conceived of books as a privileged way to gain access to and converse with the past. In Bolzoni's book, reading is a very special thing: by giving readers the opportunity to encounter and interact with bygone authors, it allows them to negotiate and shape their own identity. The close tie between reading and self-fashioning in Bolzoni's book is investigated further by examining the very interesting case of private libraries. By taking inspiration from Berenson's famous assertion that his own library "could furnish the surest and completest biography" of himself (p. XXIX), Bolzoni considers the book collections of some prominent early-modern intellectuals (Federico da Montefeltro, Michel de Montaigne) as the place that best reflects, and also contributes to shape, their identities.

The first author Bolzoni takes into account is Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374). Petrarca's prominent position in the book seems in fact totally justifiable: he was the first European author who consciously and coherently fashioned himself not just as a writer or scholar, but specifically as a reader. In his many works, Petrarca devoted a great deal of attention in picturing his own image as book hunter, voracious reader, and direct interlocutor (via books) with the ancients. In the second chapter, Bolzoni shifts towards Italian humanism as a movement committed to the re-appropriation of the cultural heritage of antiquity. In particular, Bolzoni expands on two specific aspects of this phenomenon: the rise of the philological method, according to which books start to be looked at as real entities or bodies (Bolzoni examines the case of Fiammetta's manuscript in Boccaccio's *elegia di madonna Fiammetta*); and texts as a channel permitting the resurrection of, and the dialogue with, the ancients (in addition to Boccaccio, Bolzoni also considers leading humanists from the following two centuries, namely Angelo Poliziano and Pietro Bembo). Chapter 3 moves from texts to figurative art and architecture. It first examines the interesting case of Renaissance portraits of classical authors as a way to gain access to, visualize, and interact with the ancients. It then considers early-modern private

libraries as spaces that both reflect and contribute to shaping the image of the reader who commissions the work (for example, Bolzoni selects Federico da Montefeltro's famous *Studiolo*). The theme of Renaissance private libraries as reflective of the reader's identity serves as transition towards the fourth chapter, where Bolzoni examines the issue of imitation as a way in which early-modern authors built their identities as both writers and readers. By taking Desiderius Erasmus as her primary focus, Bolzoni considers imitation as the privileged mirror through which Renaissance authors measured and defined themselves in relation to the classical world. Chapter 5 is devoted to what can be considered as the most famous piece in Western epistolary tradition: Niccolò Machiavelli's letter to Francesco Vettori (10 December 1513). This letter, which Bolzoni examines in light of the most recent developments in scholarship, dramatically captures the reading habits of one of the most representative figures of Renaissance Italy. It also tells us a lot about the multilayered nature of books (in terms of format, content, and material features) and their possible utilizations at the outset of the sixteenth century. Chapter 6 turns back to the theme of private libraries and examines Michel de Montaigne's library as a place of memory and freedom, a place that also served as a sort of "paratext" (as Bolzoni labels it) for the composition of Montaigne's *Essays*. Differently from Federico da Montefeltro, Montaigne is however also aware of the hidden danger of relying on the ancients: by listening to the voice of the brightest and unparalleled spirits of all humankind, he argues, we run the risk of losing our intellectual autonomy and even our own identity. In the last chapter, the danger of conversing with the ancients that was described by Montaigne becomes, so to speak, reality. At the threshold of the Scientific Revolution, the intellectuals' dialogue with the authorities of antiquity began to transform. Torquato Tasso is a striking example of that: since the ancients' words move our imagination, he claims, they invade our inner nature and destabilize our feelings and our thoughts. Finally, a brief appendix devoted to John Ruskin's and Marcel Proust's notions of reading concludes the book.

*Una meravigliosa solitudine* is a journey across the reading experiences of some of the leading lights in the cultural landscape of early-modern Europe. It unearths the diverse – sometimes even contrasting – ways in which intellectuals defined their relationship with books and authors, their expectations as readers, and the significance of this experience within their own intellectual life. Given the breadth and the manifold implications of the topic examined, Bolzoni's selecting criteria of both authors and texts are necessarily restrictive. Reading, in Bolzoni's book, is always a solitary, self-confined enterprise. A number of alternative modalities remain excluded from the discussion (including public reading, or group reading), and so do possible different protagonists of this story (such as female readers). Bolzoni is aware of these limitations (pp. XX-XXI), and her narrow approach does not seem to make her arguments any weaker. *Una meravigliosa solitudine* offers a stimulating, well-structured account of the intrinsically dialogic nature of reading in early-modern Europe.

Tommaso De Robertis, *University of Pennsylvania*



Fabio Massimo Bertolo – Marco Cursi – Carlo Pulsoni.  
*Il Bembo ritrovato. Il postillato autografo della «Prose».*  
 Rome: Viella, 2018. 335 pp. €60.

This dense volume focuses on one of the most important discoveries of recent decades in the field of philological studies on the Italian Renaissance: the recovery of a copy of the first edition of Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* richly annotated by its author. As it is well known, Bembo's work is one of the basic texts of Italian linguistic history, as well as one of the most important theoretical works of the Renaissance. The volume analyzed in this new monograph was discovered by the three authors in the library of an Italian private collector. Now they publish the results of an extremely detailed and precise analysis of Bembo's own copy of the *Prose*, which allows them to add an important contribution to the history of this precious text.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter (*Il postillato delle «Prose» [P1]: la storia*, pp. 7-17) Fabio Massimo Bertolo reconstructs the history of the volume containing Bembo's autograph notes (P1). Already in 1931, Carlo Dionisotti hypothesized the existence of a copy of Bembo's *Prose* in which the author had noted the passages to be corrected and the additions to be made for the new editions of his work. However, as pointed out by Bertolo, this copy should not be considered a typography *specimen*, but rather a tool that the author used privately in an intellectual effort to continuously improve his most important theoretical work. Indeed, according to the testimony of the many annotations written by the "weak" hand of the old Bembo, the author continued to work on this volume adding handwritten notes and corrections until the last years of his life (p. 13). In the eighteenth century the volume was acquired by the Venetian ambassador in Rome and future doge of the Most Serene Republic, Marco Foscarini. In the following century, the books belonging to the splendid Foscarini Library were dispersed. The copy of the *Prose* annotated by Bembo reappeared in the 1950s in the library of a wealthy and refined Italian collector. Only recently the State Archives of Venice acquired the volume, which is now available to scholars.

In the short second chapter (*La carta di guardia iniziale*, pp. 19-22) Marco Cursi examines the notes in the third fly-leaf, most of which are completely erased. Through a multispectral analysis, the author was able to identify a series of notes from the 17th century. By analyzing these reappearing manuscript texts, he assumed that in the seventeenth century P1 belonged to the library of the noble Roman family Cenci.

The third chapter (*Edizione e commento delle postille di P1*, pp. 23-121) provides the critical edition of the marginalia contained in P1, superbly edited by Carlo Pulsoni. First of all, the editor points out that Bembo did not limit himself to correcting the *editio princeps*'s typographical misprints, but continued to introduce textual amendments, personal observations and quotations of works such as Boccaccio's *Filocolo* and *Decameron* [Book III, chapters 17, 24, 56] and Brunetto Latini's *Tesoro volgarizzato* [Book III, chapter 8]. Then, Pulsoni examines the 100

chapters Bembo modified in P1. His analysis reconstructs the stratigraphy of the annotations, so as to chronologically map the various interventions that the author made to his work over a period of more than twenty years.

In the fourth chapter (*Descrizione codicologica e paleografica*, pp. 123-76), Marco Cursi conducts an in-depth paleographic examination of the hand that wrote the notes. In these pages, the paleographer demonstrates the autography of Bembo's interventions and determines a chronology of the various phases in which the Venetian humanist inserted his notes in P1.

The fifth chapter (*Gli autori e le opere in P1*, pp. 177-217) focuses on the authors and works that Bembo cites in P1 and identifies several manuscript sources that the author used during his many revisions of the *Prose*. It is very interesting to notice that Bembo used as a reliable source for the references to Dante and Petrarch the codex Vat. Lat. 3197, i.e. the manuscript that the humanist compiled for the editions of the *Canzoniere* and *Commedia* edited by him, and published by Aldo Manuzio in 1501 and 1502 (p. 185).

The last chapter contains the text of the *Prose* "according to the last intention of the author" (pp. 219-316). This portion of the book provides the complete transcription of the text of the 1525 edition accompanied by the additions and changes that Bembo inserted in his personal copy of the *editio princeps* of the *Prose*.

In conclusion, the volume edited by Pulsoni, Cursi and Bertolo is a work of crucial importance for the philological studies of the Italian Renaissance. Through this book, the authors open new avenues of investigation not only on the figure of Bembo as a scholar and a book-man, but also on the study of marginalia as a fundamental element of Renaissance cultural and literary history. *Il Bembo ritrovato* is a book that is destined to be used by all those scholars who, in the future, will be interested in the "Fourth Crown" and in the work that marked the history of the Italian language.

Natale Vacalebri, *University of Pennsylvania*

Marsilio Ficino.

*De Christiana Religione*.

Guido Bartolucci, ed.

Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2019. 356 pp. €30.

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*De Christiana religione* has always been one of the most fascinating and elusive texts in the production of the Platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). The recent critical edition by Guido Bartolucci offers therefore a crucial contribution to clarify many questions related to the work itself and its relationship with other writings of the philosopher from Figline, going "nei meandri dell'officina di Ficino" (11). He does so through a patient comparison between the variants of the text and a painstaking recognition of its several sources.

Originally composed and published in the vernacular (1474), *De Christiana religione* was subsequently re-elaborated multiple times and in multiple ways, with a revised vernacular version (1484), which also takes into account the additions Ficino made in two Latin rewritings. The printed Latin version (1476), the one Bartolucci had selected for his edition, survives in several exemplars enriched by handwritten additions and corrections by Ficino himself or by some of his collaborators. The collation of these different variants represents certainly one the most remarkable contributions offered by Bartolucci, but the conclusions he is able to draw from considering the treatment made by Ficino of his sources, by cherry-picking and omitting, is particularly relevant from the perspective of intellectual history.

In terms of quotations, the lion's share in *De Christiana religione* belongs to Eusebius of Caesarea. Ficino shares several of his main tenets with the Church Father, about divine justice, the *logos*, etc. And yet, as Bartolucci notes, Ficino removes from his Eusebian borrowings passages and motifs that would have been too harsh against ancient pagan philosophers, who are instead associated by Marsilio with the Biblical Patriarchs. Eusebius plays nonetheless a pivotal role in the delicate passages on the naturalness of religion, that Bartolucci analyzes suggesting their complementarity with sections of the *Platonic Theology*. Bartolucci devotes then his attention to a newly discovered source of the work, the *Contra Judeos* by Gerónimo de Santa Fe (fl. 1400–1430), an anti-Judaic text which relies on an allegorical reading of the Scriptures. This kind of approach contributes to form Ficino's articulate reflection on Judaism, in which he emphasized the ancient Jewish tradition as the holder of the true natural religion and the witness of the early appearances of the *logos*. This allows Ficino to remark the continuity between ancient wisdom, not only pagan but also Jewish, and Christianity. In other cases, Ficino intervenes on his text not by adding or adjusting sources, but by taming and removing some of his own potentially controversial doctrines. This happens in a passage on the original sin and the terrestrial paradise, that Bartolucci puts in connection with Origenes, that Ficino ended up to remove. The topic was of course insidious, and involved – among others – the larger question of the salvation of the pagans, more specifically of the virtuous pagan philosophers, that he endorsed (see more generally, on this long-lived debate, John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers*, PUP 2015, not mentioned by Bartolucci, who offers nonetheless a satisfying picture of the traditional theological positions with which Ficino was in contrast). And yet the salvation of the pagans, was not completely obliterated in *De Christiana religione*, since Ficino re-used material taken away from the main text in a letter accompanying the vernacular 1484 edition. In this letter Ficino used, appropriately, an authority that would have resonated strongly with his vernacular readers: Dante, who posed the question without solving it. Since the letter focuses on both those who lived before Christ, but also of those who could not know Christ after His coming, Kristeller was probably right in suggesting that Ficino is referring to a passage from *Paradiso* 19, in which the destiny of the man “born along the shoreline of the Indus River” (*Par.* 19.70–71) is discussed, but without a resolution. Bartolucci rightly notes that another possible reference is not only the obvious *Inferno* 4, but also the *Monarchia*, a text that Ficino knew very well, having translated it in the vernacular. In any case, the mention of Dante in this crucial and difficult passage certainly inspires

further investigation on Ficino's views on vernacular philosophy and its deep connection with the *Sommo Poeta*, also thinking of the well-known Dantean subtext in *El libro de amore*.

Bartolucci's analysis, in sum, has the merit to restore *De Christiana religione* to its actual role within the corpus of Ficinian work: not a mere apologetic tool, but a mirror of his ongoing philosophical, social and religious concerns. And his edition will certainly represent a precious reference for future scholarship.

Eva Del Soldato, *University of Pennsylvania*

Aleksandr Nikolaevič Veselovskij.

*Studi su Dante.*

Renzo Rabboni and Roberta De Giorgi eds.

*La Parola del Testo* 21.1-2 (2017). Pisa-Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2017. 128 pp. €125

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Aleksandr Nikolaevič Veselovskij (often transliterated as Alexander Veselovsky in English) was a Russian literary theorist and historian in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whose broad work as a comparatist has largely remained untranslated. In the present volume, Renzo Rabboni and Roberta De Giorgi aim to make some of Veselovsky's work accessible to a broader audience by editing and translating his writings on Dante into Italian. Their edition was published as the 2017 volume of the journal *La Parola del Testo*, and includes two introductory essays by the editors, various writings on Dante penned by Veselovsky, and a review of the Russian translations of the *Commedia* by Natalia Rogova Popova.

Renzo Rabboni's 'Dalla scuola storica al Formalismo' provides an essential introduction to Veselovsky's intellectual formation—how his travels and contact with other Dante scholars across Europe shaped his approach to the poet. Roberta De Giorgi's 'Il Dante di Veselovskij tra apocrifi e letteratura popolare,' focuses on Veselovsky's pervasive interest in folklore, and how many of his writings on Dante are a pretext to write about popular literature.

The main body of the volume consists of seven short works on Dante, written by Veselovsky between 1859 and 1893, and organized chronologically. These range from book reviews to encyclopedia entries, and showcase the critic's interest in Dante's folklore influences as well as the political use of Dante in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 'Dante Alighieri: la vita e le opere' [1859] is a review of Hartwig Floto's *Dante Alighieri, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Stuttgart, 1958) that commends the German scholar for writing a biography that is refreshingly unlike those "innumerabili lavori tendenziosi, dai quali viene fuori un Dante socialista, rivoluzionario [...] mentre di Dante stesso non vi è traccia" (55). Veselovsky also reviews Filippo Zamboni's *Gli Ezzelini, Dante e gli schiavi. Pensieri storici e letterarii con documenti inediti* (Firenze, 1864). While he concedes that Zamboni's readings of Dante are mostly successful, he takes issue with a reading of a particular passage (*Inferno* 23.61) and

dedicates about half of the review to that issue. “Noi siamo stanchi delle allegorie, e sopra tutto delle allegorie doppie,” (74) writes Veselovsky, shedding light on the critic’s hopes for historical work in the field of Dante studies.

The most polemical—and perhaps most interesting—section of Veselovsky’s *Studi su Dante* is the 1865 ‘Dante e le pene dell’Unità d’Italia.’ Veselovsky was in Florence in May of 1865, and witnessed the “Jubilee” celebration of the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of celebration of Dante’s birth. He sharply critiques the political instrumentalization of Dante’s memory by the city. He compares Pius IX to Boniface VIII, and accuses the “funzionari piemontesi” of liaising with foreign dignitaries rather than their own newly-minted compatriots. The short essay gives valuable insight into a Russian’s perceptions of the pageantry that followed in the wake of the Risorgimento.

Veselovsky’s longest essay on Dante, ‘Dante e la poesia simbolica del cattolicesimo’ [1866] is also a product of his 1865 sojourn in Florence. Here again, Veselovsky shows his contempt for those scholars and politicians who make Dante “un eretico, un rivoluzionario, uno strenuo difensore dell’Italia unita, ogni volta in risposta alle esigenze dell’epoca” (77). He gives some historical background on Dante and the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but then turns towards relating the *Commedia* to popular visionary works such as the *Viaggio di San Brandano*, the *Vita di San Macario*, and the *Visione* of Alberico. His goal is not to provide sources for Dante’s poem, rather to show how medieval thought and Christian doctrine create literary models, of which Dante is an expression.

In ‘Sospesi, irresoluti e ignavi nell’inferno dantesco’ [1888] Veselovsky again goes to great lengths to showcase his deep knowledge of the folklore tradition. While the essay is ostensibly about the residents of Limbo and the Vestibule of Hell, the author turns towards the folklore tradition again, to the extent of discussing the Buddhist *preta* tradition. Likewise ‘L’usura nella scala dei peccati in Dante’ [1889] compares the *Inferno* to the Byzantine *Vita di Basileo il Giovane* for reasons that are not immediately relevant to the topic stated in the essay’s title. He then suggests that Dante’s idea of usury transforms from being a sin of violence against art (as outlined in *Inferno* 11) to becoming a sort of fraud, citing the usurers’ location in Hell and in the structure of *Inferno* 17 as evidence.

The last work by Veselovsky in the volume is an encyclopedia entry: ‘Dante Alighieri’ [1893] that starts as a biographical sketch and opens out into a summary of each of his literary works. Finally, in an Appendix, Natalia Rogova Popova provides a concise overview of the Russian translations of the *Commedia* since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which should serve as a valuable reference.

One gets the impression that De Giorgi was correct in her assessment of Veselovsky: in all of his literary essays on the *Commedia*, he finds a way to incorporate folklore and popular literature. Scholars of nineteenth-century comparative literature, especially those who work on the folklore and folklorists will find his approach to the *Commedia* interesting. Likewise, scholars interested in the transnational reception of Dante during the Risorgimento will benefit from reading the incisive ‘Dante e le pene dell’Unità d’Italia.’ This volume’s greatest strength is that it makes accessible the works of a significant scholar who had remained untranslated, and therefore unknown to literary critics who do not read Russian. Renzo Rabboni and Roberta De Giorgi have certainly accomplished this goal with their translations

and introductions. The greatest limitation of Veselovsky's *Studi su Dante*, however, is that his contributions do not significantly advance the current field of inquiry. This translation paints a picture of a Russian Dante scholar at work—less compelling for his reading of the poem than for his relationship with other scholars, his deep knowledge of popular literature, and his commentary on the figure of Dante's in a newly-unified Italy.

Alex Cuadrado, *Columbia University*